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MOLLUSCAN RELIGION

In religion men too often become molluscan. They deposit a shell of ecclesiastism, creeds, confessions, heresy trials, about their deeply religious life. Like all molluscs, the man who relies on externalities, derived though they may be from his own inner self, grows fearful of the light, burrowing when he ought to walk.

Particularly do we adopt these protective devices in moments of prolonged crises. We distrust the enthusiasm with which we look to our ideals, and begin to protect hopes by outer defenses.

We have grown so accustomed to violence that we are losing the sense of its horror. A baseball game crowds out news of battles more bloody than Gettysburg. Even the horrors of Armenia fail to move us. Our moral nature no longer cries out as in the early days of the war against war itself.

We are growing sophisticated as well as prosperous.

A thousand fall at our side, and ten thousand at our right hand, but we are no longer shocked. We have grown prodigal in our preparedness, half-convinced that war is a human institution to be patiently endured. Is not attrition a part of military science?



Is then Christianity dead?

It is not dead, but too self-protecting from the miseries of life. Already we begin to be flooded with pamphlets insisting that instead of Christians uniting to serve the world, they should get together and develop a confederacy based upon some doctrine of uniformity. The faith in God and the sensitive regard for others' rights which real Christianity engenders are being incased in denominational and ecclesiastical machinery. With the whole

world at war, Christians debate niceties in organization. Organization and the pressure of daily duties are slowly coming in between the Christian conscience and the horrors of the hour. We grow detached, academic, given to compromising with hatred as a possible necessary virtue, considering national rights as superior to human weal.



The church has been given an opportunity to champion the teaching of Jesus. Is it to join in the chorus that justifies war?

Christians are seeing misery unequaled in history. Shall they discuss how much assistance they can render after they have met the high cost of living? Armenia, Poland, Belgium, Serbia, Syria, are filled with orphans, widows, cripples, starving men and suffering women. It is no time for conventional piety that massages out the wrinkles of sin. The times are exigent. We are beginning to slip our idealistic moorings. If the anchor that is within the vale does not hold, there is no escape from a wrecked tomorrow.

The message of Jesus Christ to a world like ours is not an exhortation to theological and ecclesiastical precision. We are facing an epoch of international and private hatreds, reinforced by a desperate struggle for economic advantage.

Miseries, hatreds, rivalries, callousness—these are some of the penalties which two years of war are bringing upon us. If there is any power in our Christianity, any passion for humanity, any downright loyalty to the ideals of Jesus, now is the time of all times for them to be in evidence.

How can the minister hope to escape if he neglects to proclaim with the faith of those who move mountains that love is the heart of religion and the only sane basis for society?

What shall be thought of a religion that protects itself from eager response to human need by attention to those things that engender strife or sectarianism?